

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 18, 2022

Secretary of Defense
Lloyd J. Austin III
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Readiness Policy and Oversight
Dr. David J. Smith
7700 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 5101
Falls Church, VA 22042-5101

Dear Secretary of Defense Austin and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Smith:

Thank you for your leadership in ensuring that servicemembers, military retirees, and their families have access to critical health care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. As our communities continue to take precautions to stay safe during both the Delta and highly transmissible Omicron surge, it is critical that Americans have equitable access to testing for COVID-19.

As of January 15, 2022, private insurers are required to cover over-the-counter COVID-19 diagnostic tests that have been authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and recently the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that seniors in traditional Medicare and Medicare Advantage would also be able to access up to eight over-the-counter COVID-19 tests per month at no cost to beneficiaries.ⁱⁱⁱ However, at this time, at-home COVID-19 tests are not a TRICARE-covered benefit and are not reimbursable unless it is ordered by a TRICARE-authorized provider or a provider at a military hospital or clinic.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend at-home tests if at the onset of symptoms, at least five days after coming in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, or if you are gathering indoors with a group of people who are at risk of severe disease or unvaccinated. Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA; P.L. 116- 127), TRICARE is required to cover COVID testing with no cost-sharing for the duration of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. We urge the Department of Defense to include at-home tests as a TRICARE-covered benefit under your current authority, offering those who served and their families the same COVID-19 risk reduction measures the Biden Administration has provided to those covered under private insurance and Medicare.

In order to protect all Americans from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage the Department of Defense provide the 9.6 million TRICARE beneficiaries the same access to at-home tests with no cost-sharing or medical management requirements afforded to other

Americans. Testing is a critical component to protecting the health of our communities, and we thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress

ⁱ CMS. (January 2022). *Biden-Harris Administration Requires Insurance Companies and Group Health Plans to Cover the Cost of At-Home COVID-19 Tests, Increasing Access to Free Tests*. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/press-releases/biden-harris-administration-requires-insurance-companies-and-group-health-plans-cover-cost-home>

ⁱⁱ CMS. (February 3, 2022) *Biden-Harris Administration Will Cover Free Over-the-Counter COVID-19 Tests Through Medicare* <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/news-alert/biden-harris-administration-will-cover-free-over-counter-covid-19-tests-through-medicare>